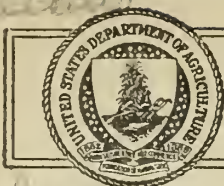


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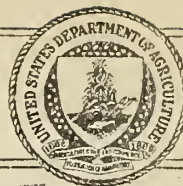
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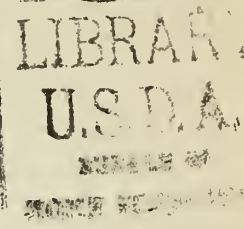


U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
FEBRUARY 3, 1937 (WEDNESDAY)



THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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FOODS AND WINTER WEATHER

Floods in the Mississippi and Ohio River Valleys. Killing freezes in California and Arizona. How do these winter weather conditions affect the market basket contents for eastern and northern housewives?

We have come to depend on the sections that are usually frost-free to supply us with mid-winter peas as green and sweet, and snap-beans, as tender and crisp, in January as in June. All through the coldest weather these and many other fresh vegetables and fruits are available wherever the railroads and motor trucks can carry them. We take for granted the perfected methods of refrigeration in transit that deliver California lettuce in garden-fresh condition to New York customers. We are hardly aware of the telegraphed exchange of market news that assures us of a continuous year-round supply of new peas, by moving in the products of Mexico and the West Indies if there is a shortage in our own American crop.

What then of the 1937 floods and freezes?

In the stricken areas the terrible floods of the great central river systems have meant, of course, almost complete paralysis of the normal distribution of food supplies -- staples as well as perishables and luxuries. Many thousands of pounds of flood-damaged food, dangerous because of possible contamination, will have to be

destroyed. Weeks will elapse before flood sufferers can resume ordinary ways of living.

But outside of those sections, the flood situation has not seriously disrupted food distribution, says the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Cross-continental trains, bringing western and southwestern fruits and vegetables have been re-routed around the flood area although some of the shipments may be delayed. Because of the special situation in California, produce usually coming east from that state at this time of year will be reduced in quantity. The supplies that go from Florida to Chicago and northern markets served from Chicago via the Mississippi Valley routes are either cut off or sent north along the Atlantic Coast and then west. Products from the southwest can reach Chicago without entering the flood area.

The December and January freezes in California have done severe damage. Orchardists have spent frantic nights tending thousands of oil heaters in the citrus groves, trying to save the orange and grapefruit and lemon crops. But the freeze has been killing, the money loss to grove owners very large.

Fall predictions for a record citrus crop included the California fruit and the estimates are now being revised downward. While no reliable estimate can yet be made, information received by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics indicates that the California grapefruit and lemon harvests will be 30 percent less than the estimates on January first. Navel and miscellaneous oranges will be 26 percent less, and Valencias 32 percent less.

Arizona grapefruit has also suffered from extreme low temperatures. Fortunately for consumers in other parts of the country, Texas and Florida crops have been unaffected by the freezing weather that hit California and Arizona, and as these other states have large crops, especially of grapefruit, housewives can still get most citrus fruits at satisfactory prices.

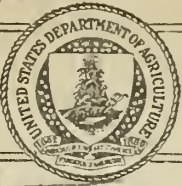
Further reports on the freeze in the Imperial Valley of California indicate that the lettuce crop has been badly frozen and that sizes will be reduced. Most of the celery crop is probably ruined. Discolored carrot tops indicate considerable injury to young carrots. The full injury to the pea crop is not yet determined. Because of the severe damage to California peas in December, Mexico has sent us much larger shipments of peas than usual.

Looking on the other side of the picture, however, it is encouraging to consumers to note that the winter crop of snap beans in Florida is 42 percent greater than the 1936 production, and there is some increase in celery, which may offset the California losses. Florida also has a 32 percent increase in acreage devoted to its winter crop of tomatoes, but part of this acreage goes to canners. Early Irish potatoes are on the increase in Florida and Texas.

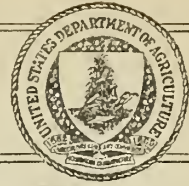
Texas is growing 94 percent of this year's early spinach acreage. While the amount to be used by canners has not been ascertained, it is safe to predict that we can get plenty of this important green vegetable all winter because the total crop is 20 percent larger than last year's.

A complete set of figures is not available for kale, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, eggplant, green peppers, cauliflower, limas, or summer squash, but all of these out-of-season foods have been coming to our tables in mid-winter in increasing supply. We have ceased to be surprised to find them in our markets.

For years now, strawberries also have been coming north from Florida in December, January, and February. The quantities used to be very limited, and the price high. It was not until 1920 that one could find Florida strawberries measured in carlots. That year there were 50 carlots shipped north in mid-winter. Last winter, 1935-1936, 1,082 carlots were shipped from Florida and this does not include shipments by truck.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

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THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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EGGS FOR THE THRIFTY

Hens in the major egg-producing sections have responded generously to this winter's mild weather. The heavy laying season began several weeks earlier than usual this year, and eggs are one of the best food buys at present.

Egg prices are the lowest they have been in several months. This is not so good for egg-producers, but there is no reason why the consumer should not take advantage of the low cost to use eggs freely.

The homemaker may find that her dealer carries government graded eggs, and if so, just now there are plenty of "U.S. Extras" or "Grade A" eggs on sale. "U.S. Standards" or "Grade B" eggs are also of good eating quality, though slightly less perfect in quality and appearance. Here are the official specifications for "U. S. Extras":

"The shell must be clean, sound, normal. The air cell must not exceed two-eighths inch in depth and must be regular. . . or slightly tremulous. The yolk must be fairly well centered and its outline may be moderately defined. It may be slightly mobile but must be free from visible germ development and practically free from other defects or blemishes. The white must be firm and clear."

In "U. S. Standard" grade the shell, while clean and sound, may be slightly abnormal in shape. The air cell may be an eighth of an inch larger and may move

as much as half an inch. The yolk may move freely and show slightly visible germ development. The white must be reasonably firm and clear.

Many prefer Grade A eggs for boiling and poaching because the whites stand up well, but Grade B eggs are entirely satisfactory for table use. The grades depend on interior quality and appearance, not on the size of the eggs. Large, medium, and small eggs may be found in any grade.

In respect to size, if eggs are designated on the container as "large" a dozen must weigh at least 24 ounces. A dozen medium eggs must weigh not less than 20-1/2 ounces, and a dozen small eggs at least 17 ounces. In buying one or another size, the housewife should ask herself whether the price for small eggs is enough lower to mean actual savings, since a dozen large ones might give her 7 ounces or 41 percent more food value than the smallest eggs permitted in the small eggs.

Market specialists say that if we should have severe weather in February or March, it might temporarily check the present rate of production or interfere with country collection and transportation. Then there would probably be a temporary rise in price.

One unusual reason for the large number of fresh eggs on the market this winter is the high cost of feed, a result of the drought last summer. Many poultry farmers cancelled advance orders for baby chicks. Thus a great number of eggs which otherwise would have been used by hatcheries came to market to add to the large early supply.

Egg prices are not likely to go much if any lower. For soon surplus eggs will be put into cold storage or sent to "egg-breaking" establishments to be frozen for use by bakeries and other large consumers of eggs.

More than half the year's egg crop is produced in four months - March, April, May and June. Unfortunately people do not change their egg-eating habits very much to take care of all this egg abundance in the spring. Storage is necessary to level up the supplies for the months when the hens are taking it easy. This year, most of the storage holdings were gone by January first.

If egg farmers make material reductions in their poultry flocks because of the high cost of feed, eggs will become scarcer a few months from now, and prices will be higher. In the long-range interest of both the consumer and the producer, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration recently made an effort to stabilize the market and forestall further flock reductions. It has bought up about \$700,000 worth of the eggs that were creating an undue surplus. These eggs are going to flood sufferers and others on relief.

Meantime, the homemaker might serve an inexpensive and delicious egg dinner or supper once in a while. Shirred eggs in pepper rings, omelet with Spanish sauce, fried eggs on ham slices, goldenrod eggs, a cheese or fish souffle are all suitable as main dishes.

When eggs are abundant is also the time for custards, meringues, angel food, Hollandaise sauce, cream puffs, fruit whips, and all the egg-rich dainties that may be luxuries in other seasons.

Every additional egg in the menus means added food value. Both the whites and the yolks furnish body-building protein, and vitamin G. The yolks furnish vitamin A if the hen has had the right food, and also vitamin D if she has been fed with foods rich in this vitamin, or kept in the sunlight. There is sometimes a statement on the egg box on this point. The yolks contain some vitamin B and are a rich source of iron and a good source of phosphorus and calcium.

The food specialists offer one caution on egg cookery. High temperature hardens most proteins. Because eggs are a protein food, the secret of success in keeping them tender is to control the heat.

To poach a breakfast egg, drop it gently into boiling salted water in a shallow pan, cover, and immediately remove from the fire. The egg itself will cool the water below the boiling point, while the sudden heat into which the egg falls will coagulate the outside enough to keep the egg whole while it cooks. The salt in the water helps to keep the egg whole. A little vinegar will have the same effect. Or both may be used. Do not let the water boil again. Let the egg stand in the covered pan until firm --- about five minutes.

To soft-cook eggs so that they will have a tender white (the old term used to be "coddle", and "boil" is outmoded entirely), start with the eggs in the shell in cold water to cover. Heat the water gradually to simmering, but do not let it boil. When it begins to simmer, cover the pan, remove from the fire, and let stand for a few minutes. The length of time depends on the degree of softness to which you want the eggs cooked and on the number of eggs and the size of the pan. So it must be found somewhat by experience. Hard-cooked eggs may be cooked the same way, but kept below boiling over a low fire for 30 minutes after the water simmers.

The same rules apply to souffles, meringues, custards, omelets, and other kinds of cooked egg dishes. Use low heat throughout the cooking. Even a fried egg should be cooked in a pan with just a little fat, moderately hot. Cover it, if you like the top coated. Low heat keeps the egg white tender.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
FEBRUARY 17, 1937 (WEDNESDAY)

THE MARKET BASKET
by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

FRUIT, TOMATO JUICES GROW IN POPULARITY

Canned fruit and vegetable juices have elbowed their way into more and more shelf space in American grocery stores. Tomato, grapefruit, orange, and pineapple juices came first. Then cranberry, prune, and now at the end of the row there's papaya juice, product of Florida's papaya trees.

Back in 1933 more than four million cases of tomato juice were packed in the United States. Last year that figure was trebled - and more than twelve million cases were prepared to meet the rising American demand. Grapefruit juice production has trebled in the three years - the 1935-36 total being more than two million cases. Pineapple juice production has increased seven fold - to more than five million cases. Other juices - such as cherry - enter the picture, too, but in smaller quantities. Practically this juice canning business dates back only to 1929 as before that the commercial pack was almost negligible.

Grapefruit juice production promises to leap forward this year. Relief needs of the nation, intensified by recent floods, are helping to move this year's bumper grapefruit crop in Florida and Texas into consumer's hands. The juice is being contracted for, for relief distribution to various states through the Federal Surplus

Commodities Corporation, thus^{taking} from the surplus in the normal channels of trade.

Jesse W. Tapp, Assistant Administrator of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, explains that this juice purchase program is one of several measures adopted to help growers meet a serious surplus situation. Canning of the juice will start soon and will continue after the fresh grapefruit shipping season is over. Many an American family which has seldom if ever tasted this tangy yellow fruit will as a result of this program have it included in their diet.

Since grapefruit is one of the best sources of vitamin C, the food substance most often lacking at low income levels, this will be an especially valuable item on tables of flood victims and of the unemployed.

The citrus fruits are -- as most people now know -- the richest of all common sources of ascorbic acid (vitamin C). Oranges and grapefruit are about equally valuable here. A single, medium sized orange will provide an individual with his day's needs of the vitamin. An equivalent amount of freshly expressed papaya juice has a bit more, but studies have not yet been made on the canned product. If a person gets this dietary need via tomato or pineapple juice he must drink about two to three times that quantity. But when the price of tomatoes is much less than that of the fruits, the vegetable may even yet be the cheapest source of vitamin C. Then too, most people like variety in their foods -- prefer to drink today one juice, tomorrow a different one.

Even for babies, orange or tomato juice is now being prescribed. Nutritionists advise a teaspoonful of orange juice twice a day for the month-old infant, two teaspoonfuls a day a week later, and a tablespoonful twice a day by the third month. So consumption of fruit and vegetable juices begins early in American life.

The reason for this widespread use of fruit and vegetable juices in infant feeding is that lack or absence of vitamin C gives rise to definite degenerative changes in certain body tissues as well as to irregularities in the development of bones and teeth.

Grapefruit, oranges, papaya, pineapples, and tomatoes contain also some vitamin B, necessary for good appetite and for normal muscle tone in the digestive tract. And all but the grapefruit have some vitamin A, which stimulates growth and general well-being.

Investigators in the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, recently tested four different varieties of oranges for vitamin C content of juice - found California navels led all the rest. Next came the pineapple oranges and the Florida Valencias and lastly the California Valencias. However, they also discovered that the Valencias were much more juicy than other oranges of equal size, so that given a navel and a Valencia of the same size one had about the same total quantity of vitamin C as the other.

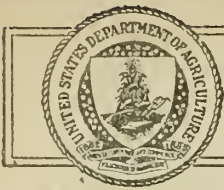
Once a can of tomato or fruit juice is opened it should be consumed promptly, as it loses food value and flavor once it has been exposed to the air. Orange juice which has stood six hours loses about 10 percent of its ascorbic acid (vitamin C), according to research findings of workers in the Bureau of Home Economics. Tomato juice which stands only an hour, they discovered, loses about three percent, and that kept three to four days has about 40 percent less than has the fresh sample.

One should never prepare fruit juices for breakfast the night before, and one should buy cans of fruit juices of a size to be emptied immediately after they are opened. Tomato juice bought in large containers and shifted to milk bottles in the refrigerator for use as needed is bound to lose some of its vitamin C.



Orangeades, squashes, and crushes, by the way, are not to be confused with fresh orange juice. Under the fair name of orangeade have paraded a long line of drinks, ranging from 15 percent orange juice to none. A "Sunset Yellow" artificial coloring, some sugar and citric acid, a bit of dried orange pulp to float about in tap water and look convincing have gone to make up some products. The Food Standards Committee appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture has proposed that orangeades shall have not less than 25 percent of real honest-to-goodness orange juice. But this proposal would reach only products in interstate commerce. Beverages sold entirely inside a state are affected only by state laws. If the state has not set up any such standard for the producer, consumers can only try to discover for themselves if the drink is what it seems.

Canned fruit and vegetable juices are on the American market to stay. As time savers, they fit into the picture of American life. They serve as an outlet for the crop surplus. Packing methods are constantly being improved in the interests of greater nutritional value, and more pleasing aroma and flavor.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of Information
Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release
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RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
FEBRUARY 24, 1937 (WEDNESDAY)

THE MARKET BASKET
by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

AVOCADO WINS AMERICAN FAVOR

By February's end, winter has had its way quite long enough. With its dun days and raw winds, its sleet and slosh, tempered though they may be by an occasional balmy afternoon, winter makes people long for something different. It is then that the green skinned avocado has an especial appeal both for the uninitiated and for the person who has long been acquainted with its subtle flavor.

And by the way, horticulturists squirm when they hear this fruit miscalled an alligator pear. It doesn't belong to the pear family at all, they say. The misnomer arose from the tendency of early colonists to fasten familiar names onto New World fruits.

Time was when the avocado was just a favorite dooryard tree of the Indians of Central America. Then came the Spaniards whose palate the fruit so pleased that they introduced it into other colonies where waved the Spanish flag. From the first recorded introduction of the avocado in 1833 by a Floridan, to its development into an industry is a long, often dramatic tale. The building of any new industry is an expensive process, costing the fortunes and often the lives of pioneers. The history of the avocado business is no exception.



Plant explorers from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, especially between 1910 and 1925, searched the avocado districts of Central America, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Mexico, and the West Indies for desirable types of this fruit to send back as plant immigrants into Florida and California. From the seeds, bud sticks, and cuttings sent by these explorers and others have developed the fine orchards of today. It was estimated that more than 20 million pounds of this fruit was eaten in this country in 1935. The demand is increasing each year. And as production has increased prices quite naturally have decreased so that now chain stores are handling the avocado and it is coming down out of the luxury food class. It can be bought in the United States the year around.

Part of the secret of the rapid rise in avocado popularity is in its high nutritive value -- part in its rich, nutty flavor. With the exception of olives, no other fruit has so large a percentage of fat, its amount varying from 7 to 26 percent depending upon the variety. The caloric value, of course, varies with the fat content, but a fourth to a half of a medium sized avocado will usually yield 100 calories.

The total sugar content is less than 1 percent -- far lower than that of most fruits, so that it is practically carbohydrate free, a fact which makes it useful in diabetic diets. Its phosphorus content is higher than that of most common fruits, and the iron relatively high as fruits go. It also outranks all other fresh fruits as a source of protein and is important for its vitamins. It has all the known vitamins, C being the only one not found in liberal quantities.

Until fairly recently grocers themselves, outside California and Florida, didn't know much about the fruit and sometimes unintentionally sold immature avocados, or those which were past their prime and had grown rancid. Shoppers even yet sometimes need guidance in buying. Shape, skin color, and size reveal little as to fruit quality. The avocado may be round, ovoid, or pear shaped and range from six ounces to two or three pounds in weight.



The skin may be almost as thin as that of an apple and fairly smooth, or thick and smooth, or it may be leather, rough, and shell like. Color varies according to species from purple, maroon, and dark mahogany to near black, and through various shades of green. One favorite has bright little yellow dots on a pebbled dull green skin.

Avocados are ready for eating when the flesh is soft like butter, but not mushy or discolored. Gentle hand pressure will inform the inquirer. Medium-sized avocados weighing about a pound and having a bright fresh appearance, the flesh fairly firm or just beginning to soften, usually are the best buys. Dark sunken spots warn of decay. Deeply cracked or broken skins also may indicate decay, as they give ready entrance to bacteria.

The texture of the flesh of the avocado should be soft, buttery or marrow-like not stringy. It is usually yellowish or yellowish green in color, and the cut surface should stay bright and attractive for an hour or so. Eventual darkening is inevitable of course, so that no more fruit should have the skin removed than is intended for a meal.

In flavor the avocado should be rich and nutty, free from bitterness or soapiness, not flat and watery. The seed is always fairly large but should make up less than a fifth of the total weight.

As to ways of serving, the epicures prefer it on the half shell or in salads and cocktails. Because of its texture and the subtlety of its flavor, it combines best with vinegar or with such acid fruits and vegetables as oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and tomatoes. Served on the half shell with seed removed, many a connoisseur asks just the salt cellar or a cruet of French dressing at hand. Others prefer a bit of lemon juice or some catsup. Still others like the shell filled with other fresh fruits diced. A section of grapefruit, then a similarly cut bit of a bright red tomato, and next to it a section of avocado - this arrangement repeated - and the

whole set on a bright green lettuce leaf with some French dressing added, is a dish to make the eyes brighten, the mouth water. Some people like it combined with fresh pineapple and lemon juice.

Used in slices with lemon juice or vinegar it makes a delectable sandwich. Diced for a fruit cocktail it may be served with the ruby hued pomegranate and perhaps one or more of the tangy fruits added.

Other salad favorites are avocado with cabbage, celery, cucumber combinations, or in a gelatin, for a mixed fresh vegetable salad. A person with a sweet tooth may prefer it combined with apple.

The avocado develops a bitter flavor on being subjected to much heat. However it may be diced and added to soups, consommés, or omelets just before serving.

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